Literary Terms: Week 10-11 (Drama Terms)

**Format**: On one side you need to have the vocabulary term. On the other side you need to have the provided definition as well as an illustration and an example. Make your cards creative and colorful, as engaging in the creative process will help you deepen your understanding of the terminology.

TERM DEFINITION EXAMPLE/CLUE

Allegory A symbolic drama or story in which the

surface details imply a secondary meaning. Allegory

often takes the form of a story in which the characters

represent moral qualities. *Example: The Crucible uses the witch hunts of Puritan New*

*England as an allegory for the anti-Communist rhetoric of the 1950s.*

Aside Words spoken by an actor directly to the audience,

which are not "heard" by the other characters on stage during a play.

The action at the end of a [tragedy](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/drama_glossary.html#tragedy) that initiates the [denouement](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/drama_glossary.html#denouement) or falling action of a play.

Catastrophe

Catharsis The purging of the feelings of pity and fear that,

according to Aristotle, occur in the audience of tragic drama.

The audience experiences catharsis at the end of the play, following the catastrophe.

Comic Relief The use of a comic scene to interrupt a succession of intensely tragic dramatic moments.

The comedy of scenes offering comic relief typically parallels the tragic

action that the scenes interrupt. Comic relief is lacking in Greek tragedy,

but occurs regularly in Shakespeare's tragedies*.*

*Example: Giles Corey in Arthur Miller’s The Crucible.*

Iambic pentameter consists of five sets of unstressed syllables followed by stressed syllables

Ex: “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?”

Foil A character who contrasts and parallels the main character in a play or story.

Laertes, in *Hamlet*, is a foil for the main character; in *Othello*,

Emilia and Bianca are foils for Desdemona.

Dramatic irony A contrast or discrepancy between the characters in the play know or believe

and what the audience knows. *Example: In Romeo and Juliet,*

*the audience knows that the lovers will die, but the lovers, themselves, do not.*

Soliloquy A speech in a play that is meant to be heard by the audience

but not by other characters on the stage. If there are no other characters present, the soliloquy represents the character thinking aloud. Hamlet's "To be or not to be"

speech is an example. See [*Aside*](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/drama_glossary.html#aside).

Monologue A speech in a play spoken to other actors onstage,

heard both by the audience as well as other characters.

Tragedy A type of drama in which the characters experience [reversals](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/drama_glossary.html#reversal) of fortune,

usually for the worse. In tragedy, [catastrophe](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/drama_glossary.html#catastrophe) and suffering await many of the characters,

especially the hero. Examples include Shakespeare's *Othello* and *Hamlet*; Sophocles'

*Antigone* and *Oedipus the King*, and Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*.

See [*Tragic flaw*](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/drama_glossary.html#tragic_flaw) and [*Tragic hero*](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/drama_glossary.html#tragic_hero).

Tragic Flaw A weakness or limitation of character, resulting in the fall of

the [tragic hero](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/drama_glossary.html#tragic_hero). Othello's jealousy and too trusting nature is one example.

See [*Tragedy*](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/drama_glossary.html#tragedy) and [*Tragic hero*](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/drama_glossary.html#tragic_hero).

Tragic Hero A privileged, exalted character of high repute,

who, by virtue of a [tragic flaw](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/drama_glossary.html#tragic_flaw) and fate, suffers a fall from

glory into suffering. Sophocles' Oedipus is an example.

See [*Tragedy*](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/drama_glossary.html#tragedy) and [*Tragic flaw*](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/drama_glossary.html#tragic_flaw).

Recognition The point at which a character understands his or her situation as it really is.

Sophocles' Oedipus comes to this point near the end of *Oedipus the King*;

Othello comes to a similar understanding of his situation in Act V of *Othello*.

Unity

The idea that a play should be limited to a specific time,

place, and story line. The events of the [plot](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/drama_glossary.html#plot) should occur within a short period of time,

should occur within a give geographic locale, and should tell a single story.

Aristotle argued that Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* was the perfect play for embodying the unity.

Denouement The resolution of the [plot](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/drama_glossary.html#plot) of a literary work.

It literally means “unknotting” in French. The denouement of *Hamlet* takes place

after the [catastrophe](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/drama_glossary.html#catastrophe), with the stage littered with corpses. During the denouement Fortinbras

makes an entrance and a speech, and Horatio speaks his sweet lines in praise of Hamlet.

Trochee a metric unit in which a stressed syllable is followed by an unstressed syllable

Ex: “Double, double, toil and trouble.”

.

Pathos A quality of a play's action that stimulates the audience

to feel pity for a character. Pathos is always an aspect of tragedy,

and may be present in comedy as well.

Fourth Wall The imaginary wall of the box theater setting, supposedly

removed to allow the audience to see the action.

The fourth wall is especially common in modern and contemporary

plays such as Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, Wasserstein's *Tender Offer*, and Wilson's *Fences*.

When actors “break” the fourth wall, they essentially address the audience directly, acknowledging

the play, itself. (Ex: In “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” when Puck apologizes to the audience for the play breaks the fourth wall. Many productions of “Hamlet” also break the fourth wall.)